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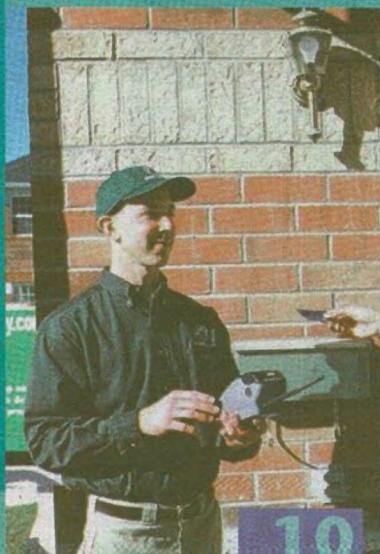
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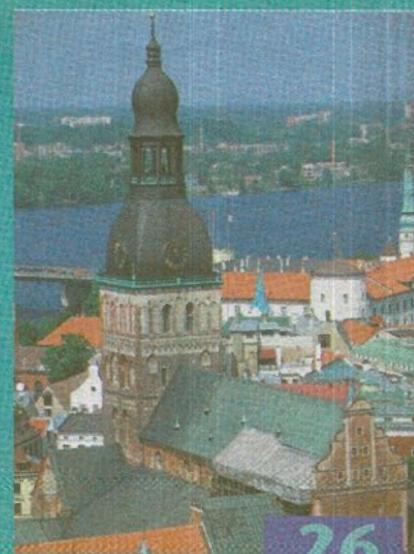
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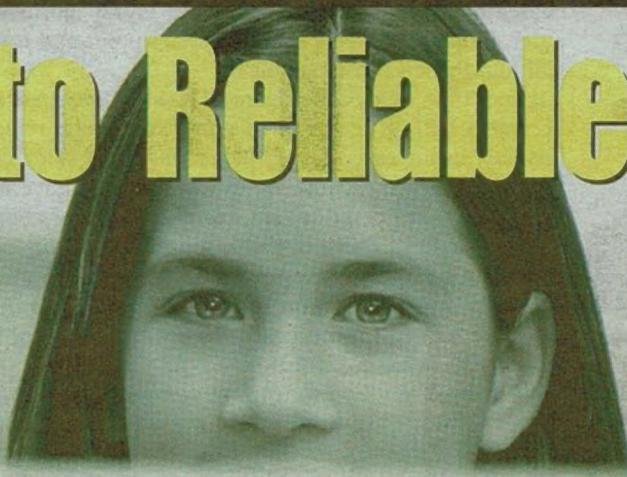
See page 10 for details on the latest Photo Spree winner.

Page 22 has a list of the winner from our Cool Tunes contest.

toronto computes!

August 2003

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From the editor



Saying goodbye is always hard to do. So long, see ya later or talk to you soon are much more non-terminal endings that people prefer to use. But as this is the last issue of *Toronto Computes!* a goodbye is in order.

Started in 1984, the first issue came out in November of that year, *Toronto Computes!* was a computer enthusiast magazine. It was run by fans of the burgeoning computer and was aimed at educating readers about the new phenomenon of personal computers.

The era of the personal computer really took off in 1984 – that was the year Apple released the revolutionary Macintosh using an extravagant commercial during that year's Superbowl. But that wasn't the only big announcement that year – Microsoft released DOS 3.0 and *Word 1.1*, Hewlett-Packard introduced the LaserJet laser printer with 300 dpi resolution, the online service Prodigy was started by Sears and IBM and Intel introduced the 80188 processor. Unlike the conclusions one can draw from George Orwell's 1984, the year was great and it held great promise for the future. Things were changing – and everybody knew it.

I was not into computers in 1984. I had a brief fling with the Commodore PET computers in highschool but the only thing I really learned, besides some rudimentary BASIC coding, was that I did not like programming computers. I discovered computers in 1986 when I became the editor of a small student newspaper. I worked on a Mac, printed the stories on a LaserJet and did manual paste-up – desktop publishing was not on my horizon yet. I had a specially pur-

chased bag for the Mac that turned it into a "portable" computer – that was a very optimistic viewpoint and my back still hurts when I think about it.

It was 1986 when I discovered *Toronto Computes!* and I became a faithful reader of this publication and remain so to this day. In the early days it helped me solve some computer related problems, pointed me to users groups, gave me BBS listings so that I could log on and share tales of computer woe with others, check out what's new and upcoming in the computer world and gave me the latest prices on all sorts of computer systems and components. *Toronto Computes!* does the same today as it did nearly 20 years ago except that the industry has changed drastically.

When I got hired on to work at *Toronto Computes!* near the end of 1999 it was clear that everything was changing and quickly. It was the height of the Internet boom. We were given the mandate to expedite the change of *Toronto Computes!* from a magazine about technology to one that encompasses a technological lifestyle. In the four years since this has been done to a great extent. Today *Toronto Computes!* is more about the wonderful things you can do with your computer than the computer itself.

In this sense *HUB: Digital Living*, the magazine that will be replacing *Toronto Computes!*, is a logical extension of what we have been doing for the last several years. *HUB* will be a national magazine and will also be taking the place of our sister publication *The Computer Paper*.

So although this editorial is a goodbye from me and the rest of the staff at *Toronto Computes!* this is also an invitation to *HUB: Digital Living*. If you enjoyed what we have been doing for the past 19 years you will love the new focus and look of *HUB: Digital Living*.

Nestor Gula can be reached by e-mailing nestor@tcp.ca ♦

Reader Feedback

Musical Musings

As secretary-treasurer of the Canadian Independent Record Production Association (CIRPA), I've not only had the opportunity to read volumes of material regarding the demise of recorded music, but I'm also a student of the game. I agree with your Editorial comments *TC!* June and would add the following.

Apple has now taught a new generation how to download from the Internet. Apple's greatest hits for the first 3 weeks cite U2, Sting and Cheryl Crow as the winners so it's not the kiddy down loaders who are forking out the \$0.99. Now that we have taught these purchasers how to download, one wonders how long before they wander

to other free sites and start stealing music?

A recent Nielsen's study of downloads seems to indicate that Rap and Urban music are not download victims and are actually flourishing at retail.

Another study indicates that Indy labels are not suffering to the same degree as the majors. Indy music is apt to be new and exciting, so I don't think that this is coincidence.

I was at A&M and Polygram (Canada) during the introduction and glory years of the CD. You're right on that catalogue fed the market while new music suffered.

We need a new messiah. Elvis, the Beatles, Disco (uh!), Rap – but these were generations (of buyers) that could afford and did pay for their music.

Basic economics (ie. supply vs. demand) underlines the fact that the record industry always had a greater supply than demand and has created demand through imaginative marketing. They've kept sight of their ability to supply, but (as you point out) failed to recognize that demand was shifting, not only in demographics but in the method of distribution.

The challenge is to recognize the new demand, reinvent the supply and service it with new marketing tools. Perhaps we are returning to a singles market in which case history does repeat itself.

Regards, keep up the good work.
Gary W. Hubbard, CGA
Manager - Music & Ancillary Revenues,
Alliance Atlantis Entertainment Group



The Editor *Toronto Computes!*
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tcletters@tcp.ca

Letters on issues raised in the paper or general computer topics are welcome. Please be brief. We regret that we are unable to look up stories from past issues, suggest products, or solve all your computer problems. All correspondence must include your full name in addition to your e-mail or snail-mail address. Letters may be edited for space or content.

Letter of the Month

For his letter this month, Gary W. Hubbard wins a copy of Symantec's *Norton Internet Security 2003*. To keep your computer and data safe when accessing the Internet this software package includes: *Norton Antivirus*, *Norton Personal Firewall*, *Norton Privacy Control*, *Norton Spam Alert* and *Norton Parental Control*.



Toronto computes!

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Hard Drives



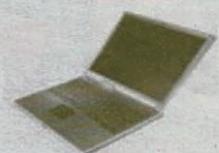
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Movies and music in your pocket

By ANDREW MOORE-CRISPIN

Anyone that travels often by airplane has likely suffered through countless movies that are neither particularly interesting nor entertaining. With some exceptions, in-flight movies are almost as tedious as the ride itself. And we won't even talk about the in-flight music.



RCA (www.rca.com) recently released a product that could go a long way to keep travellers occupied with their own entertainment.

The Lyra RD2780 is a 20 GB audio/video jukebox capable of storing up to 80 hours of recorded shows, home movies, feature films or countless hours of music recorded in Windows Media format, MP3 or MP3PRO, a new format that approximately halves the size of an MP3 file. The RD2780 can also store up to 100,000 digital photos in JPEG format.

The device uses a USB 2.0 connection to the home computer and can play for up to 15 hours on its lithium ion battery, the company says.

All this and none of the pilot interruptions that always seem to come at a crucial point in the story.

New Treo flavour

First, there was the Palm OS organizer and cellular phone, then it went colour, and finally, the Treo from Handspring has done away with the flip up earpiece that was very prone to breaking even with normal use.

The Treo 600 series (www.handspring.com/treo600/) will be the first Treos to be released since, in an ironic twist, Palm bought out a troubled Handspring, whose executive board was made up of

former Palm employees who splintered from the company to become a competitor.

The Treo 600 will have a built in VGA (640x480) camera, a QWERTY thumb keyboard and will use Palm OS 5 running on an ARM 5 processor.

The first products in the Treo 600 line will start shipping in the fall, though pricing has yet to be revealed.

Add a camera to your handheld

As evidenced by numerous PDAs, cell phones and any number of other devices, working digital cameras into existing products is all the rage.

For those left out of the loop – having recently bought a new PDA sans camera – but who want to get in on the trend without shelling out for a new handheld,

Animation Technologies Inc. may be able to help.



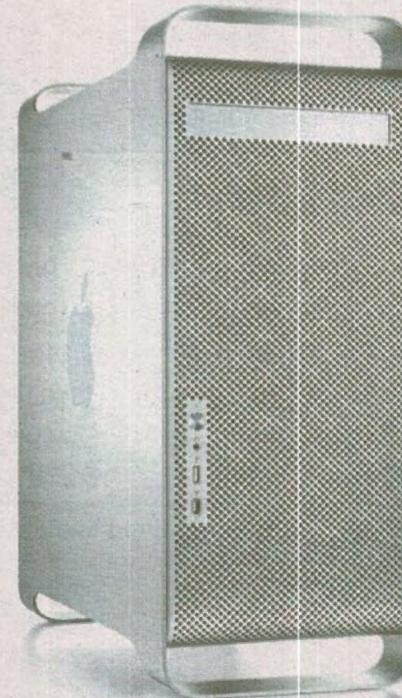
The FlyCam-SD is the world's first PDA SD camera, the company says. The 1.3 megapixel digital camera plugs in to the top of a PocketPC (Palm OS is not sup-

ported) and acts as well as a digital camcorder – though calling a 320x240, 30-frames-per-second video capture device a "digital camcorder" is stretching it.

The FlyCam-SD has a built-in optical viewfinder and flash and uses a .5-inch lens with a 54 degree viewing angle that can rotate through 210 degrees and captures images in BMP, JPG, or GIF format at 320x240, 640x480, or 1,280x1,024 resolution. However, with no power source on board, the camera module will eat through the PDA's batteries, especially if using the flash.

An Apple to drool over

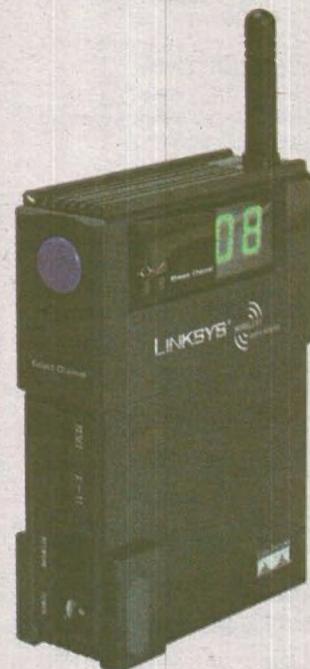
While Apple may not make too many announcements compared with some other manufacturers, when they do speak out, the news is usually pretty big.



some Apple owner's chagrin, few games make their way to the Mac platform. For full specs and details on Mac's new G5 line, visit www.apple.ca/powermac.

Online gaming without the mess

The mess associated with playing video games used to be empty pizza boxes, pop cans, beer bottles and the like. However, since going online, hardcore console gamers have had a wholly different mess to deal with, namely the metres of Ethernet cabling from the office where the Internet connection enters, to the entertainment centre.



A number of companies have released WiFi adapters aimed specifically at the console gaming market, most recently, Linksys (www.linksys.com) with its Wireless-B Gaming Adapter. The adapter uses the 802.11b standard to allow net-enabled consoles to access the Internet wirelessly for online gaming.

Linksys says the Wireless-B can also connect two consoles using existing system link capabilities in Xbox games like *Halo* and *Brute Force* and in Nintendo's recently announced *Mario Kart: Double Dash* by hooking the systems up to their own Wireless-B adapters and selecting the appropriate channel on the LED display.

While it doesn't so much get rid of the wires as it does make them shorter, it could help to tidy up some of the mess associated with online console gaming. Now if only we could do something about those pizza boxes and beer bottles. ♦

By SUE BOWNESS

Thank goodness for online shopping. No more sales or whimsical last-minute purchases – just sit down, stick to your shopping list, get what you need and go. Well, if you think you're really off the hook and you'll never make an impulse buy again, take a closer look. It may be a new media but a closer look reveals some old tricks. From front door to final sale, online stores like Grocery Gateway (www.grocerygateway.com), Amazon (www.amazon.com) and Chapters (www.chapters.indigo.ca) are featuring many of the old-school storefront obstacles as their bricks-and-mortar counterparts. They may not be able to manage the in-store taste test, but they get pretty close with most other consumer shopping weaknesses. Let's take a walk through, and see.

At the front door is where you first notice the hard sell: the weekly specials, the special holiday and seasonal merchandise. At Chapters, a sign to pre-order the new Harry Potter book has been front and centre for months, and Mother's Day provided a perfect occasion to launch its new jewellery section, where you can now buy pendants and bracelets online. Amazon chose to employ that important entranceway in highlighting its exclusive tenure on the

new Segway Human Transporter (only two per customer, and only US\$4,950). Even when there is not a season to peg, topics are flagged, like babies or leisure. What parent is not going to feel a twinge of guilt buying things for themselves while leaving their baby out of their Amazon order, especially when it's so easy to access? Amazon appropriately lists these random topics in a box called Browse.

Grocery Gateway is master of the authentic store layout, with the entire site arranged in aisles as if you're walking through a real life store. At the top level, it's like walking through a mall containing all sorts of specialty shops, with tabs like grocery, fresh market, organic and natural, and drugstore. Click down a level into a section like Grocery and find yourself with an alphabetized list of categories like cereals and breakfasts, condiments, cooking and baking, frozen foods, frozen desserts, and the list goes on. On the front page of every category you'll find the Internet equivalent of the end-aisle display, with a featured product that is usually on special. It's like the only thing missing is the taste test, and even then it's only the taste that's missing, not the testimonial. "Step out of the Juice Box! Try something different today," it says at the front of the Cold

Beverages aisle. Now that's product placement.

Next stop: The bargain basement. If you thought the days of the super sales would disappear once shopping moved online, take a look at the 80 per cent off tab at Chapters. Or the weekly specials aisle at Grocery Gateway. Amazon offers a gold club for repeat customers, where making a purchase entitles you to access exclusive special offers. Even coupons are making the transition to online, either arriving via e-mail or being handed out in paper format from the stores with promises of free delivery or dollars off on a first purchase. My personal favourite has got to be Amazon's bottom of the page deals, though you can almost feel yourself on the escalator descending to the bargain basement as you scroll down, waaay down, to the bottom of the page.

on the front page that connect you with resources on what everybody's talking about.

Finally the cash register, where final temptations traditionally await the tired shopper. You'll notice these temptations are mostly geared towards adults, since most moms aren't going to be online with their kids. Unfortunately, the grabby-kids-eager-for-checkout-side-skipping-ropes-and-bubble-gum demographic is one that online grocery stores may actually have lost. And yet there's plenty for the adult. Though you may not have to stand in line as long, the usual goodies are still there to tempt you. Grocery Gateway offers standard impulse buys: chocolate, discounted items, and women's magazines.

At the outset, the thought of online marketers borrowing the same stale techniques from their concrete counterparts might have seemed slightly offensive. Yet perhaps you might also feel a certain sense of ... nostalgia? Maybe it is the tug at our sense of familiarity in seeing supermarket aisles, or that we secretly enjoy the old checkout struggle over buying that magazine, either you feel virtuous for resisting that trash they keep at the checkouts or, on your weaker visits, anxious to get home and read that magazine you grabbed, make that clicked on, on your way out. Certainly they serve to put the emotional element back into shopping – the thrill of the bargain, the wistfulness of the wish list, the luxury of the browse. And all without the heft of the shopping bag. ♦

Toronto computes! AUGUST PHOTO SPREE WINNER



THE WINNER:

Congratulations to Brad Quan whose picture won our seventh bi-monthly Photo Spree challenge, Street Scenes. Brad used a Toshiba PDR-M71 camera to capture the image. He tweaked the hue on the image in Photoshop.

For his image Brad Quan wins a Lexmark P707 Photo Jet Printer.

LEXMARK

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HUB
DIGITAL LIVING

The new Photo Spree Assignment will appear in the debut issue of HUB: Digital Living.



Online stores borrow old retail tricks

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14TH AVE.
20 CrownSteel Dr. #16
TEL: 905-513-9935
FAX: 905-513-8717
MON-FRI: 10:30-19:30
SAT: 9:30-18:00
SUN: 11:00-17:00

TORONTO
BATHURST AVE COLLEGE ST. SPADINA AVE
396 College St.
TEL: 416-921-0702
FAX: 416-921-9938
MON-FRI: 10:30-19:30
SAT: 9:30-18:00
SUN: 11:00-17:00

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NORTH YORK
SHEPPARD E. WILLOWDALE BAYVIEW
201 Sheppard Ave. E.
TEL: 416-224-5553
FAX: 416-224-2678
MON-FRI: 11:00-20:00
SAT: 9:30-18:00
SUN: 11:00-17:00

BRAMPTON
BARTLEY BULL PKWY. MAIN ST. STEELES AVE.
1 Bartley Bull PKWY #24
TEL: 905-460-1339
FAX: 905-460-0464
MON-FRI: 10:30-19:30
SAT: 9:30-18:00
SUN: 11:00-17:00

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ASUS P4C800-DX	\$245
ASUS P4G8X Deluxe	\$231.9
ASUS P4P800-DLX	\$185.9
ASUS P4P800-VM	\$147
ASUS P4PE/LAN-UAY	\$125.9
ASUS P4S533-X	\$79.9
ASUS A7N 8X Deluxe-UAY	\$171.9
ASUS A7N 8X-X-UAY	\$110.9
EPOX 8RDA+	\$158.9
Gigabyte GA-6VTXE-A	\$76.9
Gigabyte GA-8PE800	\$97.9
Gigabyte GA-7VAXP	\$120.9
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Networking

D-Link 4-Port Router	\$43.9
D-Link DFE-538TX OEM	\$6.9
D-Link Router w/ Printer Server	\$66.9
LinkSys Wireless G Router	\$166.9
LinkSys 4-Port Router	\$67.9
LinkSys Wireless G Adapter	\$89.9
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Hard Drive

40G Maxtor 7200 ATA-133	\$81.9
80G Maxtor 7200 ATA-133	\$106.9
80G Western Dig. 7200 8M	\$120
120G Western Dig. 7200 8M	\$153.9
200G Western Dig. JB 7200	\$281.9
40G Seagate 7200 ATA-100	\$79.9
80G Seagate 7200 ATA-100	\$105.9
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Printer

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Epson Stylus Photo 820	\$115.9
HP DeskJet 3320V	\$54.9
Canon i550	\$158
Samsung ML1430 Laser	\$250.9
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BenQ 5300U 1200dpi USB	\$84.9
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S.B. 128-Bit PCI OEM	\$20.9
S.B. Audigy 5.1 OEM	\$67.9
Creative S.B. Audigy Mp3+	\$125.9
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XP2400 or XP2500

\$5

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7:30PM AUGUST 6TH
OR UNTIL
QUANTITIES LAST



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▪ Intel Extreme 3D Graphics, SoundMax 3D sound
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Reliability, compatibility and quality were founding principles at MDG when it was created in 1991 and they've continued to be hallmarks, helping vault MDG to prominence

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50 Bloor Ave.
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SCARBOROUGH
50 Bloor Ave.
(416) 421-8010

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BLOOR AVE.
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50 Bloor Ave.
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(519) 895-8650

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(905) 938-8100

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50 Bloor Ave.
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(905) 318-8861

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50 Bloor Ave.
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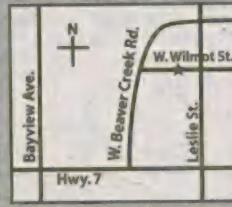
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FEATURE



Palm life: Shopping made handy

By NESTOR GULA

One of the first things I've used my Palm for is to make a shopping list. Since I have my Palm with me most of the time, I am able to jot down items that we've run out of or things that I think would enhance my home.

Initially I tried using the memo pad — Palm's little built-in application that saves handwritten notes. This is a great feature but my handwriting leaves a lot to be desired — including clarity. I then switched to the built-in notepad feature of the Palm. This is a small word processor, similar to Notepad in Windows or SimpleText in Macintosh. I thought it was working fine. My wife thought otherwise.

Before going on a shopping jaunt we would discuss the needs of our household. She would fire off a list of things we needed that were not on my list. Unfortunately, although I am comfortable with Graffiti, the Palm way of entering data, I am not that quick. While I would still be jotting down the first item, she would be on the fourth or fifth item of her list. It got worse at the supermarket. There I'd be, standing in the middle of the aisle consulting my Palm, oblivious to the other shoppers around me. The Notepad is not the ideal way to manage a shopping list because it is not easy to scratch items off the list.

A solution came rather unexpectedly. I was peering into my Palm in the aisle of my local No Frills, when another customer caught my eye. He too was consulting a Palm. We exchanged greetings and started chatting. He showed me a special program that managed his shopping list. *HandyShopper* seemed really good and he offered to beam it to me (via the wireless infrared function that's built into every Palm). Up to that time I had never beamed or been beamed so I politely declined.

I downloaded *HandyShopper* from the PalmGear site (www.palmgear.com). This is more than a simple list manager — it is a full-fledged product database. The way you set it up is by taking a few old shopping receipts and entering the product name and price. You can have the same item show up listed in different stores with different prices — so this is a very good comparison shopping tool as well.

If you need an item you simply check it and it goes from the All list to the Need list. If there are items not on your list you can enter them with an estimated price or no price. It is easy to update the list with current prices in the store — although I am not fanatical enough to wander through the store entering all the products into *HandyShopper*. Once you have all the items that you need checked, you can get a total price for the purchase by hitting the button with a dollar sign. This is very cool, although the price will vary occasionally because of fluctuations in the prices of fruit and vegetables. You can also vary the quantity of what you need to buy from one to 999,999.

HandyShopper really works well and has simplified my shopping list conundrum. I'm still peering into my Palm while shuffling through the supermarket's aisles, but I'm not taking up too much space and am not bothering anyone.

And now for something completely different.

I was walking down the street one sunny day and pulled my Palm out to jot down some ideas that just happened to pop into my head. I was astonished to notice that I could not make hide nor hair of the Palm screen. I began fiddling with the settings but this was to no avail. I could barely read what was on my screen. The Palm m130 that I am using has a colour screen and I thought this might have something to do with it. I ducked indoors and the device seemed to be alright. Stepping out into the street I was relieved to see that the Palm was back to working normally.

Analyzing my actions in those frantic five minutes I realized that it was not a problem with my Palm but with the clip-on sunglasses I wear. It seems that the Polarized UV protection that is present in my glasses to shield my eyes from harmful sun rays also effectively blocks out my Palm's screen. The good news is that those same clip-on glasses have effective UV protection. Next time I buy sunglasses I'll take my Palm along to test the glasses — but I digress. The only downside is that I will have to take off my sunglasses every time I check my Palm while on the summer streets. ♦

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Digital Shots: Creating a photo essay

By ANDREW MOORE-CRISPIN

In moving from film to digital photography, it can be easy to forget some of the most basic pointers for taking interesting photographs.

Thanks to the immediacy and the fact that each shutter click doesn't have a direct cost associated with it, it can be easy to go wild, snapping a shot of anything that is the least bit interesting. Carrying over a bit of the film mentality, where every shot is valuable and can't be undone later, can help give digital photos clarity, focus and interest.

One way of ensuring that digital pictures get the respect they deserve – the same respect given to their film counterparts – is to tell a story with the images you take. Whether chronicling a birthday party, a family get together, a vacation or a photography field trip, thinking along the lines of a photo essay can help to tell the story and give definition to your photography.

Choose your focus

Bad and oft-used puns aside, it's important for photographers to have a specific focus in mind before they give themselves to the shutter's siren song

and start going wild, taking a slew of pictures to be sorted through later.

The focus can be anything the photographer feels will give the pictures some interest beyond just the event they document. For example, in the case of a birthday party for a young child, the focus should be something beyond just the event itself. Instead of just taking simple snapshots throughout, think about what you want viewers to see in the photographs and shoot accordingly.

One approach might be to pay particular attention to interactions between everyone at the party. This specific approach would require the photographer to be as unobtrusive as possible to get candid reactions between all of the kids and adults in attendance.

Another example might be pictures taken along the hiking trail. In this case, pick a trail you are familiar with and think about a story that can be told along the way, whether it focuses on unused buildings, wildlife or plants, flowers or insects along the trail.

Find the common elements

To keep pictures above the level of simple documentary snapshots, photographers can look for like elements in the

scene as a whole that fit together with a common thread. Using the two previous examples, the common elements could be very specific, as with people's reactions to the events of the birthday party or more general, as with various wildlife shots along the hiking trail.

Common elements help to elicit reactions from people and when the pictures are assembled logically, the collection tells a deeper story than simple snapshots with no common elements or specific order.

Variety is the order of the day

Choosing one specific topic for a photo essay leaves photographers vulnerable to taking a series of pictures that, while they fit together logically, don't hold any particular visual interest. The best way to avoid this is to vary the way pictures are taken.

When shown a series of pictures that are taken in much the same way – wide angle, for example – a viewer's interest will quickly fade. To avoid this, mix up the shots with some wide angle scenery shots, some close-ups on specific elements of interest in the scene, some macro shots and so forth. Also, change the way the pictures are taken beyond

just wide angle and close-up. Changing the position of the camera from straight on to looking up (giving the thing or person being photographed an air of significance) or looking down (which can give the opposite impression) at the subject will help to keep viewers interested through to the end of the photo essay.

A picture is worth a thousand words

Aside from creating interesting pictures that are pleasing to the eye, the core motivation for a photo essay is to tell a story with pictures as opposed to words. The story can be anything you like. The story of a family camping trip can be every bit as interesting to view, though perhaps without the impact, as the story of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the US – one of the most popular subjects for a photo essay – if the photos are well composed and varied, and if the story is told well.

Some photo essays I have viewed or put together myself have included: animal victims of urban sprawl (aka roadkill), man-made structures infringing on the wilderness, downtown architecture of both big and small cities, and one simply focusing on rain, where the story wasn't particularly obvious, but the pictures were nice enough to make up for it. ♦

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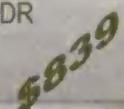
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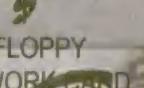
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Adventures in digital video Light up - It's (almost) free and easy

By LEE RICKWOOD

Even the best camcorders can make video images that are grainy or murky. Most likely, there's not enough light on the subject.

In previous columns, we've learned about adding light wherever possible. You can buy studio lamps and battery-driven portable lights, on-camera luminaries, and smaller hotshoe mounted mini-lights.

But the professional kits can cost thousands of dollars. Variable-height (extending up to 122 cm, usually) stand-mounted work lights are incredibly cheap and very powerful. Dual, 1,000-watt models are usually less than \$50. Fixed-height floor models are around \$30. Both types should have rotating lamp heads for easy use; look for lamps to rotate 360 degrees and tilt up to 180 degrees forward and back with adjustment knobs that hold firm.

Some hardware stores stock dual-head work lamps with extra long power cables, too, which are very handy — and even more so when the two lamp heads are for different wattage lamps (250 and 500 W, for example).

You'll probably want to remove the protective metal cage on whatever work lamp you get, as it will cast a weird, grid-like shadow (but sometimes patterns of lights and shadow are very effective; see below for more).

If 1,000 W output is too much for your needs, there are 300 and 100 W replacement bulbs, for usually less than \$10 each.

Some lamps will specify the colour temperature output, which is important for videographers. Luckily, most tungsten and quartz halogens are 3,200 kelvins (K).

If you don't have a camera with pre-set or degree-measured white balance, "incandescent" white balance is a workable option. If you leave your camera on auto white, the image colour might be off, or may even "float" a bit in mixed light environments (daylight is around 5,600 K; white fluorescent tube lights are usually 4,000 K).

Before you leave the hardware store, get some control over your new lights.

Whether you're using 1,000 W work lights or the bright noonday sun, you'll

want to control the light — steer it one way or the other, soften it, diffuse or colourize it.

Sheets of plain foam core or any large white cardboard are a great way to reflect light into your scene. They easily diffuse or soften harsh, direct light. Shine your work light onto the foam core or set it up to reflect the sunlight and then angle the reflected light onto your subject; it creates a nice soft lighting effect.

Aluminum foil, white or clear shower curtains, even car window reflectors can be used to achieve similar results. Crumple up the tin foil for really bouncy, diffused light, or use it flat and smooth. Use the shower curtain to soften light shining through it (or suspend it behind your on-camera subject to throw the background way out of focus). If you can find car window reflectors with different colours on either side, you have doubled your lighting kit's creative potential very cheaply.

Clothespins, twist-ties, string and the like can be used to affix your bounce board to a stand, a tree — almost anything will work in a pinch.

Speaking of stands, buy some big plastic buckets, concrete mix and metal piping. For ten bucks or so, you can make a light stand that even the heaviest lamp or windiest day won't upset.

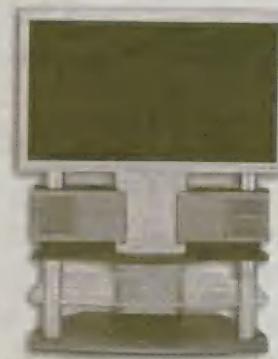
Before you leave the store, grab a little craft knife or similar cutting tool. You'll want to shape and size your light-bouncing material, of course, but you also might want to cut some holes in it.

You can buy a pre-fabricated gobo or cookie cutter or make one. Either way, shining light — especially coloured light — through holes and patterns cut into a sheet of cardboard can add wonderful texture and depth to your video scene.

Try cutting some unevenly shaped and sized holes in a large sheet of cardboard. Cover them with different coloured gels, taped on. Shine a work lamp through the holes, and onto the wall directly behind your subject (and hit the subject's face with a little pure white light) — it looks great on-camera.

Whatever camcorder you use, you can get better results anywhere you shoot by shedding a little light on the subject. So be adventurous, and light up. ♦

Big HDTV



By ANDREW MOORE-CRISPIN

Moving up from a standard CRT television to any HDTV is a pretty amazing experience.

However, there are a few control niggles that require users to (gasp) read the manual; as with most all technology, as things get more advanced, there's a lot more reading to do to understand it.

more INFO

PT-45LC12
\$6,499.99
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www.Panasonic.com

The Panasonic PT-45LC12 is a projection HDTV. We tried it

out with an Xbox and a copy of Sega's *Baseball 2K3*. Much to our chagrin, there wasn't time for a marathon movie session. Hooking up the Xbox to the PT-45 required a special HDTV adapter, which is a \$45 accessory. As all newly released Xbox games support HDTV, the game came to life on the larger-than-life screen.

The PT-45 supports 480p, 720p and 1080i, the three most common HDTV display formats. To display DTV programming, a set-top receiver is required.

The screen measures 45 inches diagonally, and for those with a lot of video or audio equipment to hook up, there are 3

A/V and 3 S-Video inputs, two each on the back and one each under a flip cover on the front.

The front control panel of the PT-45 is uncluttered, with only a power button and a navigational d-pad that also takes care of channels and volume. All of the other controls are hidden behind a small click out panel that looks like part of the right speaker grille.

While the two speakers are adequate, they can't give the effect to movies and games that a 5.1 speaker system offers. Anyone willing to shell out \$6,499.99 for a television likely wouldn't feel that buying a set of 5.1 speakers is painful. ♦



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Musical Odyssey: Digital audio formats

By NESTOR GULA

When the music industry made the switch from vinyl to compact disc as a method of delivering recorded music, they started the mess that they are in now.

Compact disc technology was initially developed by Philips with contributions from Sony towards the end of the development cycle. By digitizing music, the industry inadvertently made it much easier to copy music. The laborious and often imperfect job of taping records was now just a few clicks away. Although the technology to digitally copy and transfer music files developed much later than the audio CD, it is very prevalent now.

If you are recording music at home, you are frequently confronted with different audio formats. Most audio formats on a PC just refer to different compression levels and various levels of audio quality.

Wave and AIFF

These are basically uncompressed audio formats. Wave and AIFF (Audio Interchange File Format) are simple linear audio that is played at a sampling rate of 44.1 kHz and 16-bits. Because these files do not have any data compression they are large – about 10 MB per minute. These files can be read by your computer, but more importantly they can be read by a standard CD player. If you want to burn an audio CD to play on a regular CD player, you must format your songs to one of these formats. There is another format, SD2, but this is rarely encountered by someone recording at home. Wave and AIFF files can also be stored on a CD as a data file.

Mighty MP3

This is the file format that revolutionized the music world. With average compression capabilities and not bad audio quality, the MP3 format has emerged in the last few years as the most popular music compression file type. Its flexibility and general acceptance means that it will be with us for many years to come. Witness the prevalence of MP3 players and portable, home and car stereos that now have MP3 playback capability. The size of an MP3 file is generally about 1 MB per

minute. This rate can vary because MP3s can be made at various rates. The standard is 128 kbps at 44.1 kHz. Lower settings decrease the file size and degrade audio quality while higher settings have the opposite effect. MP3 compression works on a lossy system that permanently eliminates information deemed unnecessary. If you create an MP3 from a Wave file and then convert it back, it will not restore the audio quality. Some CD burning software automatically converts MP3 files to Wave files when you burn a CD, yielding an audio CD. CDs with just MP3 files have to be burned as data CDs.

Windows Media Format

WMA, the acronym for Windows Media Audio format, is Microsoft's answer to the MP3 compression format. The files are slightly smaller than MP3s and have equal audio quality. However not all players, whether audio devices or players on a computer, can recognize WMA files. The players that have WMA playback capabilities also play MP3s.



When the Windows Media Audio format came out it had a system of copyright protection built in and was supposed to fix the problem of the free exchange of MP3 files. This system was unwieldy though and is generally ignored.

Real Audio

This is an audio-streaming format. The complete file is not downloaded on a computer. The only thing that is on your computer, when you listen to a real audio file, is a pointer file that directs the real audio player to the location of the file. The quality of the sound is similar to MP3 but the advantage for the distributor is that the files cannot be copied and shared. The disadvantage is that you have to be at your computer and online to listen to the music. As well, the player tends to be a bit bulky and uses a lot of the computer's resources.

There are lots of other compression formats around, such as MP3Pro, Monkey's Audio, Ogg Vorbis, and AAC (Advanced Audio Coding), but they suffer from incompatibilities and low acceptance rates. Most good music management software will handle most if not all of these formats with aplomb, even if your own recording software does not have the filters built in. ♦

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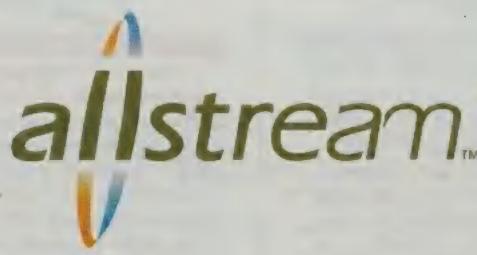
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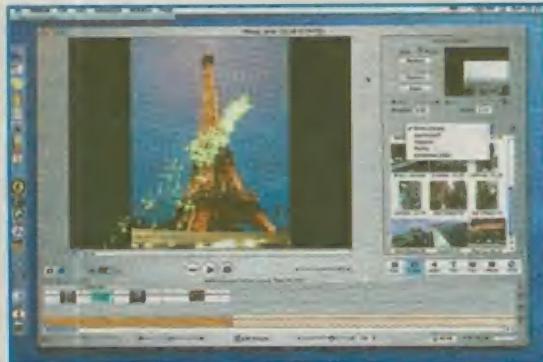
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By DWAYNE R. BROWN

Integration is something that sets Apple apart from the crowd. With iLife, your music files from iTunes are available in iPhoto for slide shows and iMovie for background music. Your pictures in iPhoto are available in iMovie for stills and new effects. iMovie now has a natural transition to iDVD. And I don't mean that it's easy to drag and drop from program to program. I mean that the files you're looking for are available right there in your application, without having to point to a file location. Once again, it's called integration.

iTunes remains relatively unchanged. Apple has added a new feature called Smart Playlists — in a simple setup, you just type the name of an artist in the window and you instantly have a

playlist with all the songs from that artist. Another useful tool is the volume optimizer. It automatically adjusts playback level so that all songs are consistent. This should save a few speakers.

iPhoto has greatly improved for the benefit of the amateur photographer. Apple has included two new touch-up tools. Enhance is a one-click solution that analyzes a picture, corrects for poor white balance and brightens up the colours. Retouch is a tool similar to Heal in Photoshop. It allows you to fix minor blemishes on your picture. As Apple demonstrated, you can even remove a strand of stray hair from a face. Add these two tools to the pre-existing red-eye reduction and you can reach a quality that was previously only available in a more expensive program like Photoshop.

Saving albums has also undergone a bit of enhancement. You can burn an album or slide show directly to CD or DVD and maintain the arrangement of your album when you place the disc back in your computer. It's just like it was when it was in your iPhoto folder.

Or you can burn a slide show complete with music from iTunes right to a DVD and watch it on your TV.

The biggest change you'll notice with iMovie is that it now has its own resizable window. It's a small thing, but it makes a big difference in the way you work and organize your screen. There are more than a few new special effects and they generally aren't cheesy either. A really nice addition is the Ken Burns effect. It allows you to take still pictures from iPhoto and add motion to them in your iMovie project by panning and zooming around the still, based on starting and ending points that you enter. This effect works extremely well with documentaries when film footage is not available.

Audio has also been given a boost in iMovie 3. Apple has included 28 new sound effects from Skywalker studios (that's right, the same people who created Star Wars) and now allows to you to individually adjust the volume for each of the three audio tracks anywhere along the timeline.

Finally there's iDVD. Well, all that really needs to be said is, Chapters. When you are editing your movie in iMovie, you can now add chapter index-

es so that you can navigate through your DVD. Add this to dozens of new professional looking themes and the ability to add any iTunes file or iPhoto album and you have the tools to produce a top quality DVD right in your own home.

Call it what you will — integration, convergence, or natural progression — everyone knows that computers are becoming the digital hub for home entertainment. While most computer potential is lost on the general public, iLife not only gives Mac users a glance at the future, it lets them taste a bit of it right now. ♦

more info

iLife
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www.apple.ca

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All the right curves

the way with new technologies?

While the Macintosh has never been anything less than reliable, Apple fell into a sleep during the better part of the 1990s. As the decade came to a close, one of Apple's co-founders, Steve Jobs, came back into the fold and began rebuilding. First on his agenda: Build a new operating system from the ground up. OS X has completely reinvented and revitalized the Mac. Software developers have been jumping on the Mac bandwagon faster than ever. But as the sigmoid curve suggests, don't stand still. The latest release of OS X, Jaguar, has only been around for a year and already there is word that another major update is coming. Code-named "Panther," Jobs unveiled it to developers in June. It's expected to start shipping in the fall. Panther will be the fourth major OS update in as many years. That is an example of the sigmoid curve.

But just putting a new face on an old box isn't enough — they've built a new box too. Apple's hardware is more stunning than it has ever been while still being leading edge. The new G5 processor has been announced and prices are

still falling into line with what consumers are willing to pay. Before you buy a PC, see what Apple has to offer.

While Apple has maintained a firm footing in the professional graphics and audio world through the past decade, the company has renewed its interest in the home. Digital hub is a catch phrase that computer gurus like to throw around, but only Apple seems to be truly capitalizing on it. There has been a slew of software directly from Apple that tightly integrates the computer with media and peripherals attached to it. Mac is now becoming the standard of what a digital hub should be. *iLife*, the centre of the hub, includes *iTunes*, *iPhoto*, *iMovie* and *iDVD*. Each program is fully capable of integrating your digital lifestyle.

On other fronts, *iSync* is picking up steam to maintain that ever-important access to your current data anywhere and anytime across several different platforms. *Safari* and *Keynote* are proving that Mac can do it better. FireWire maintains its superiority over USB with FireWire 800 and Apple takes the lead by being the first manufacturer to support 802.11g, which is poised to become

the new standard in wireless transmission. Airport Extreme is an example of that technology.

Apple has also made a serious commitment to the networking community with its Xserve line of products and newly announced Panther Server operating system. Hooking up a Mac network or adding a Mac to a PC network is now about as easy as plugging in the cables and turning the machines on. Really, there's not much more to it than that.

It's kind of ironic when you think about it. There is so much more to Apple now than there has ever been, yet the simplicity of how everything works together is astounding. The amount of engineering that goes into creating that simplicity makes staying ahead of the sigmoid curve a challenge. As soon as they think they've got it right they have to find a way to make it even better. Clearly, Apple has chosen a path that places the company on the front edge of the curve. While trying to keep up with it is hard, it sure is a fun ride. OS X was just the beginning of what could prove to be a long curve that leads Apple to a very successful future. ♦

There's this mathematical curve called the sigmoid curve that some businesses have adopted as a way to express the desired growth of their company. In the corporate world, the sigmoid curve represents the following: "The things and the ways which got you where you are, are seldom the things to keep you there." In plain English, that means change — and change while things are going well, not when they start to go downhill. The key to the sigmoid curve is for a company to shake things up and introduce new products or new ideas while they seem to be on top. By doing this, the curve of revenues, popularity, or whatever measure you use can be perceived as always rising, reaching a plateau, then rising again. No one likes to see that curve sloping down to the right.

Someone at Apple has to be subscribing to this method of management. How else can you explain the unrelenting release of new hardware and software and the clear desire to once again lead

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64M AGP 4X VIDEO
SoundMax Digital Audio & LAN
48X16X48 CD-RW / 1.44 FDD
10/100 NETWORK
PS/II KEYBOARD / MOUSE
ATX 350W CASE / SPEAKERS
* \$20 GIFT *

\$829

PENTIUM-4 2.4 GHZ
17" FLAT MONITOR
ECS Mainboard (533MHz / USB 2.0)
512MB DDR RAM
80 GB HDD 7200 RPM *HOT*
52X24X52 CD-RW / 1.44 FDD
GEFORCE 4 MX-440 64M TVOUT
SOUND & LAN ONBOARD
Multimedia KB & Wheel Mouse
ATX 350W CASE / SUBWOOFER
* Samsung 19" LCD — \$229

\$789

PENTIUM-4 2.6 GHZ
INTEL 845D Chipset USB 2.0 M/B
512MB DDR RAM
80 GB HDD 7200RPM *Special*
ATI RADEON 9000 PRO 128M DDR
SOUND & LAN ONBOARD
52X24X52 CD-RW / 1.44 FDD
Microsoft Multimedia Keyboard
Microsoft Optical Mouse
ATX 350W FRONT USB P4 CASE
* Samsung 15" LCD — \$372

\$269

VIA 1.0 GIGA PRO
PC CHIPS M70+ M/B (USB 2.0)
128 MB SDRAM PC-133
30 GB HDD ATA133
VIA VIDEO ONBOARD
4 CHANNEL SOUND
52X CD-ROM DRIVE
1.44 FLOPPY DRIVE
10/100 ETHERNET ONBOARD
PS/II KEYBOARD / MOUSE
ATX MID TOWER CASE

\$289

AMD DURON Pro 1800+
ECS K70+ M/B (USB 2.0)
128 MB SDRAM PC-133
128 MB MEMORY
512 MB HDD ATA133
SIS 730 VIDEO ON BOARD
SOUND ONBOARD
52X CD-ROM DRIVE
1.44 FLOPPY DRIVE
10/100 ETHERNET ONBOARD
PS/II KEYBOARD / MOUSE
ATX MID TOWER CASE

\$419

AMD ATHLON XP 2000+
ECS K755A PRO M/B (USB 2.0)
256 MB MEMORY
40 GB HDD 7200 RPM
SIS 64MB VIDEO CARD
SOUND ONBOARD
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1.44 FLOPPY DRIVE
10/100 ETHERNET ONBOARD
PS/II KEYBOARD / MOUSE
ATX MID TOWER CASE

\$529

AMD ATHLON XP 2200+
ASUS AT7V8X MAINBOARD
256 MB DDR RAM
60 GB HDD 7200 RPM
GEFORCE 4 MX-440 64 MB TVOUT
SOUND ONBOARD
48X16X48 CD-RW / 1.44 FDD
10/100 NETWORK CARD
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ATX 350W CASE / SPEAKERS
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AMD ATHLON XP 2400+
17" FLAT MONITOR
ECS K755A PRO M/B (USB 2.0)
512MB DDR RAM
80 GB HDD 7200 RPM *HOT*
52X24X52 CD-RW / 1.44 FDD
GEFORCE 4 MX-440 64M TVOUT
SOUND & LAN ONBOARD
Multimedia KB & Wheel Mouse
ATX 350W CASE / SUBWOOFER
* Samsung 19" LCD — \$329

MONITOR

SAMSUNG
17" 753DF — \$173
19" 950B — \$275
19" 955DF — \$305
15" LCD 1518 — \$379
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LG
17" E700B — \$179
15" LCD 1511S — \$359
17" LCD 786LS — \$599
NEC
15" LCD 1560V — \$409
17" LCD 1760NX — \$659
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17" FLAT MONITOR — \$149
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80GB/120GB/200GB — \$119/\$159/\$199
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18GB / 36GB — \$269 / \$299

PRINTER

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LEXMARK Z25 (1200X1200) — \$55
LEXMARK X83 all-in-one (RF) — \$99
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LEXMARK X125 all-in-one — \$189
LEXMARK E210 LASER — \$249
SAMSUNG ML-1710 LASER — \$299
HP LASERJET 1000 — \$279
MUSTER 1200U SCANNER — \$59
NETWORK

VIDEO CARD

ECS 64MB VIDEO CARD — \$39
GEFORCE 2 MX-400 64M — \$49
GEFORCE 4 MX-440 64M tvout — \$59
ATI Radeon 9000/Pro128M — \$45/\$95
ATI Radeon 9200 128M DDR — \$109
ATI Radeon 9600 128M — \$179
ATI Radeon 9800 Pro 128M — \$159
ATI all-in-w Radeon 7500 64M — \$179
ATI all-in-w Radeon 9000 pro 64M — \$259
MSI GF4 MX-440TV 64M tvout — \$79
MSI GF4 MX-440TV 64M — \$195
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MSI GF4 MX-440TV 64M — \$219
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MSI GF4 MX-440TV 64M vivo — \$319
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MSI GF4 MX-440TV 64M vivo — \$6119
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MSI GF4 MX-440TV 64M vivo — \$6

Of wills and lawyers

REVIEWS

By NESTOR GULA

When my wife and I decided that it was about time to make a will, we had a bunch of options. We could go to a lawyer, use one of those kits that are advertised on television, use specially developed computer software, or write what we wanted on a piece of paper in the vain hope that if the unthinkable happens, it will hold up in court.

We chose the software, of course. Intuit claims that *WillExpert* has been "developed by will and estate lawyers from across Canada" (Excluding Quebec.) As soon as you use this software a bit, you realize that there is truth in that statement. The software package stinks of lawyers. As you fill out what is to be your will, answering simple questions, this is very evident. It felt like sitting in a lawyer's office and answering questions.

What *WillExpert* does very well is to explain each and every step in relatively plain English. You can easily click on various terms and get a full page explanation of each term, its use, and consequence. The attention to detail in *WillExpert* is very good. However, the end result for the user is that you really have to be in the mood to write a will and deal with the legal nitpicking. Just putting a simple will together became quite a task, as the software was asking so many questions about alterative beneficiaries and executors.

The end result is always the place where software should be judged. *WillExpert* scores big here, because after going through the questions and then printing our wills, my wife and I both got 13-page documents that only a lawyer and judge would go through and comprehend. ♦

moreinfo

WillExpert
\$48.99
Intuit
www.intuit.ca

Requirements:

133 MHz processor, Windows 95/98/ME/2000/XP, 32 MB RAM, 20 MB hard disk space, Internet Explorer 5.5 (Included), 6x CD-ROM drive, video card with 256 colours and 800x600 resolution (1,024x768 recommended), Internet connection for online features.

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MSI KT4VL 8x AGP, USB 2.0 Network \$ 14.99
ATI Radeon 9200 128MB w/TV Out PB ATI \$ 144.99
Retail Plus 4 Port Router \$ 39.99
GeForce 4 MX 440 8x 64MB DDR w/TV Out \$ 64.99
Modem \$ 24.99
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30 GB Value IDE Hard Drive
52x Max EIDE CD Rom Drive
64 MB 4x AGP Video Adapter Shared
17" 23hdpi 1280x1024 Monitor
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INTEL® PENTIUM® 4 1.7 GHz
15" TFT-LCD DISPLAY,

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2x USB Ports and 1x 1394 Firewire Port
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FREE Lexmark Z605 Color Printer*

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\$1889 pANDROID G732T**

INTEL® PENTIUM® 4 2.4 GHz 533FSB
15" TFT-LCD DISPLAY,

Intel® designed Thermal Solution
256 MB DDR 266 MHz RAM
40 GB Performance Hard Drive
DVD Rom Drive and CD Re-writer

ATI Mobility Radeon 9000 64 MB Video
56k Modem and 10/100 Lan built in
4x USB Ports and 1x 1394 Firewire Port
12 Cells Li-Ion Battery

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FREE Lexmark Z605 Color Printer*

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FREE UPGRADE TO 120 GB Hard Drive

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52x24x52x CD Re-writer BurnProof Technology
ATI Radeon 9200 128 MB AGP Gaming Video
AC97 Codec Stereo Sound Adapter
600w PMPO Stereo Speakers with Sub-Woofer
Optical PS2 Mouse
17" 23hdpi 1280x1024 SVGA Monitor
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256 MB DDR PC2700 @333 RAM
80 GB 7200 RPM Ultra ATA Hard Drive
16x DVD-Rom Drive with 40x CD-Rom Support

GeForce4 MX440 8X DDR 64 MB AGP Card
AC97 Codec Stereo Sound Adapter
600w PMPO Stereo Speakers with Sub-Woofer
Logitech Multimedia Keyboard & Palm Rest
Optical PS2 Mouse

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CPU \$ 124.99
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Video Card \$ 94.99
ATI Radeon 9200 128MB w/TV Out PB ATI \$ 144.99

Network \$ 64.99
Retail Plus 4 Port Router \$ 39.99

Web Cam \$ 24.99
5 Port Switch 10/100 \$ 24.99

10/100 USB Network Adapter \$ 19.99
56.99 Intel 56K PCI V.90/V.92 Fax Data Modem- \$ 12.99

SAMPLE PARTS PRICES

Panasonic Floppy Disk Drive 1.44MB \$ 9.99
Logitech Multimedia Keyboard w/Palm Rest \$ 14.99

350w ATX Power Supply \$ 17.99
30FT RJ45 Cable \$ 9.99

48x Compatible 50Pc Black CDRW Media \$ 12.99
Optical Mouse PS2 \$ 12.99

Web Cam Retail Box \$ 24.99
120w PMPO Speakers \$ 4.99

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80 GB MAXTOR 7200 ATA 133 Hard Drive \$ 112.99

Video Card \$ 94.99
ATI Radeon 9200 128MB w/TV Out PB ATI \$ 144.99

Network \$ 64.99
Retail Plus 4 Port Router \$ 39.99

Web Cam \$ 24.99
5 Port Switch 10/100 \$ 24.99

10/100 USB Network Adapter \$ 19.99
56.99 Intel 56K PCI V.90/V.92 Fax Data Modem- \$ 12.99

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30FT RJ45 Cable \$ 9.99

48x Compatible 50Pc Black CDRW Media \$ 12.99
Optical Mouse PS2 \$ 12.99

Web Cam Retail Box \$ 24.99
120w PMPO Speakers \$ 4.99

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Video Card \$ 94.99
ATI Radeon 9200 128MB w/TV Out PB ATI \$ 144.99

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Retail Plus 4 Port Router \$ 39.99

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5 Port Switch 10/100 \$ 24.99

10/100 USB Network Adapter \$ 19.99
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Technology means home is never too far

By MARA GULENS

Preparing for my family's overseas adventure, I knew I would need technology in order to work. I also anticipated it would be nice to be able to connect with friends and family back home, but I had no idea technology would play such a large part in determining the overall success of our travels.

Let me step back a bit. Our destination was Latvia, a small country directly across the Baltic Sea from Sweden. Latvia regained its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991 and is currently emerging from post-Soviet chaos as it prepares to enter the European Union.

In other words, it's a place that's gone from zero consumer technology to fiber optic cables, updated telephone systems and complex Web design in only 13 years. The perfect place to test the latest technologies, and see what it's like to connect in a foreign environment ...

Where to begin

Without the right equipment, cables and passwords, we would have been nowhere. But far more important was the Internet connection, which gave meaning to all the equipment we lugged with us.

Latvia's one and only telephone company, Lattelekom, has a Web page and fortunately we were able to read up on the various connections available and set up a time to get connected before we left Canada.

Three days after our arrival, an engineer arrived and for 30 lats (\$72) installed a phone line, and for another 40 lats (\$95) hooked us up to the Internet (price includes one month's usage). Surfing ain't cheap. But it turns

out access to anything other than .lv during business hours is not part of the price. We had to fork out another 9 lats (\$22) a month for outside-Latvia World Wide Web access during business hours.

The only terrifying moment was after the initial send and receive, which happened to coincide with the release of the Bugbear virus. For one sleepless night I imagined we had screwed up with our wireless network and that post-Soviet hackers were making their way into our system ... and any system we were connected with. Perhaps a case of jetlag. More likely too many Matrix-type movies.

Getting it right

During our six-week sojourn we were happy to discover that our anticipation of what hardware we'd need was bang on.

Notebook computer: The iBook I had on loan from Apple was perfect for overseas travel. The biggest bonus was that it was equipped with an Airport card (wireless network card in PC-speak), which meant I could move around the apartment and even do my writing in the kitchen and bedroom. This also meant we didn't have to stress about the Lattelekom guy drilling holes all over an apartment we didn't own.

The iBook had a CD burner which was perfect for backups (in case the laptop got lost or was stolen). Even better, we could make CDs of the hundreds of digital photos we took (and even give them away), and listen to new discs we acquired.

Here's the biggest plus and one worth considering. I'm a Mac user, and the iBook allowed me to stick to my platform. Not only does this mean I was comfort-



able with the system but it also means that once I returned home I was able to copy my entire desktop back to my G4.

Printer: Before I left Toronto, I searched around for a printer that would be "small enough to fit into a suitcase, yet powerful enough to make you feel like you're in business, even though you're thousands of miles away from home."

The HP Deskjet 450 mobile printer fit the bill, and I'm totally convinced it would be perfect for the cottage and any other roaming environment. It weighs only a few pounds, is the size of a small radio and is so easy to use that it brings you back to the days when technology was just two buttons and a plug.

But the best thing is that the Deskjet 450 is wireless and battery operated. This means that you can take it with you wherever you go and even if you don't have

infrared capabilities required to print wirelessly, you're not stuck searching for power. Moreover, when you're in battery-mode, the printer is smart enough to shut down if you're not using it.

Cell phone: Before I left for Latvia, a friend wrote to tell me that I wouldn't be considered human unless I had a cell phone. How very true. People in Latvia — and as I understand it, all of Europe — live on cell phones, no matter what their income bracket and where they happen to be. In fact, many people don't even carry watches, because they rely on their mobile phones to tell time.

While text messaging is catching on in Canada, over in Latvia it's so hot you wonder how we do without it. That's in part because PC ownership is not yet as widespread and partly because text messaging is considered an aspect of modern mobility. It's just not polite to make phone calls at midnight — even if the midnight sun is still high in the sky. Another reason to text message: It's cheaper than voice.

Fido's Sony Ericsson T300 GSM world phone was my first go at anytime, anywhere, no-mess mobile connectivity. The system automatically links up to local carriers, meaning that when our plane was delayed in London I just picked up and dialed to Latvia to inform friends of a change in plans.

The next time I pulled out the phone, I was on a dirt road in central Latvia. Again the phone located the local carrier, and I did my banking in a place that has never even seen Canada Dry.

The only catch is that in some parts of the world, such as Latvia, you pay a hefty price for this service. If you're staying anywhere for a lengthy period of time, it's much cheaper to get a local phone

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and connect directly to the local carrier.

In this respect the European system also differs. In Europe, phones are separate from their numbers, meaning people swap phones and just stick to their Smart cards. I ended up borrowing my cousin's Nokia, and later upgrading to a Siemens C55. Each phone had different benefits when it came to typing, and the Nokia was by far the most intuitive.

The final cell phone bonus was a perk that will probably take a few years to perfect. After lots of communication with the local mobile phone company, my husband managed to set up a GPRS connection, which provides an always-on

wireless Internet connection via the USB connected cell phone. Theoretically this allows us to beam images from anywhere to anywhere. So much for being away.

Eye to eye across the Atlantic.

I'm saving the best for last, just because these are items I could have lived without, but with which life was just so much more, well, exciting.

Thanks to our DSL connection, we were able to have video hook-ups with Canada. The first time was absolutely incredible. Midnight in Riga, 5 PM in Canada. My sister was getting ready to serve the kids dinner, we were ready to

head to sleep.

While the setup took many hours to perfect, and still wasn't perfect (we often ended up with either the video or the audio and filled in the gaps with text), it nonetheless allowed us to communicate, and proved technology can bridge the gap.

In what ways and to what extent it can do so remains a question. While we know how to communicate via voice and the written word, Web-camming takes some getting used to. This was illustrated best when my six-year-old nephew made faces on the Canadian end, while my husband and father did

the same thousands of kilometres away. Somehow the most primitive language seemed to work best.

The DSL connection also allowed us to upload digital images to our Web server back in Toronto, giving friends and family immediate access to our adventures.

In the age of immediacy this is more critical than we had anticipated. For one, the pictures provided the thousand words we never got around the writing. After all, who has time to repeat all those stories upon returning home?

Mara Gulens (maragulens@yahoo.com) is a Toronto writer and editor. ♦

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Alan Thwaits

The
World
Is My
Cubicle



A view through the side window

lines to this effect in many driver education programs.) The sad reality, though, is that car drivers are usually doing many other things in addition to driving their cars. And an awful lot of those things have to do with technology.

Consider, for instance, the radio-CD player combination, which graces the dashboards of even the most feeble econoboxes these days. I can hear some of these folks coming a kilometre or two away. But even my fellow geezers, who are more inclined to quietly tune in to soft rock, are oblivious, perhaps lost in dreams of high-school dances and lost opportunities. Hip-hop or crooner tunes, it's all the same thing — a separate world for each and every driver.

Kick things up a notch, and we're in the world of the cellphone-equipped driver. They're all over the roads these days — very often literally. Sometimes the phone's in the driver's hand, sometimes it's attached via a hands-free cable. But the driver's attention is on the phone, not on the driving that needs to be done. It's always interesting — and not a little unnerving — to see someone take off from a stop at a traffic light, and sail through a left-hand turn in the

face of a stream of oncoming traffic, while dialing a number or checking the phone's screen to see who just called. Here's a heartfelt plea, folks — if you see yourself in this picture, for my sake and everyone else's, give your head a shake. You're not doing anyone any favours.

Now, we live in exciting times, so things like CD players and cellphones aren't the limit to the foolishness car drivers can get up to. I've seen folks driving along city streets while checking out their handhelds and chatting on the cellphones. What's this all about? Are they looking at a database of information about the person they're talking to? Consulting an onscreen map to see where they're headed? Or is this just an illustration of the old adage that people do whatever they can get away with, without much (or any) thought as to whether they really need to?

In-the-car DVD players? Fortunately, they're not too common yet, and they're almost always found in the rear passenger section of the car or minivan. But, while the kids are watching Elmo on the DVD, Mom and Dad are very often monitoring the wee ones' enjoyment of the movie, or — worse yet — intervening to stop the

commencement of actual physical hostilities. Besides, if Mom and Dad are really tech-savvy, and are the proud owners of a really upscale road behemoth, they're going to have their own GPS-based screen on the dashboard of the car. That way, they can be distracted from the task of driving while they consult the on-screen map (and each other) about whether the charming little boite they read about recently is in the vicinity or not.

Almost everyone seems to like to pile one distraction on top of another. Go on, you can do it! Roll up the windows so you can't hear what's going on around your vehicle. Turn up the air conditioner, and crank up the tunes on your CD player. Call a friend on your cellphone, and then check out directions to the restaurant where you're going to meet on your handheld. If that isn't keeping you busy enough, put on some eyeshadow and light up a cigarette. After all, it's your world to enjoy, isn't it? Heaven forbid common sense should get in your way.

Alan Thwaits, a *TC!* Contributing Editor, is a freelance journalist who writes about computer, communications, and business technologies. He can be reached at praxis@pathcom.com. ♦

Faithful readers of this column know that your correspondent spends a lot of time on his bicycle. I cycle throughout the year, in everything from urban and suburban to remotely rural settings. Oddly enough, that reliance on cycling gives me fascinating glimpses into how people are using technology.

When riding a bicycle, you're at the same level as everyone's car windows. Traffic lights and stop signs offer numerous opportunities to check out what's going on inside the world of cars. Now, I'm as civilized and private as most folks of my age and background, so I don't peer and pry into places that are none of my concern — but it's hard to ignore the obvious.

What's obvious is that people who drive cars are seldom just driving cars. You'd think that piloting a 200 horsepower, one-and-a-half ton vehicle through the complexities of city traffic would engage all of its driver's attention. (In fact, I think there are actually guide-

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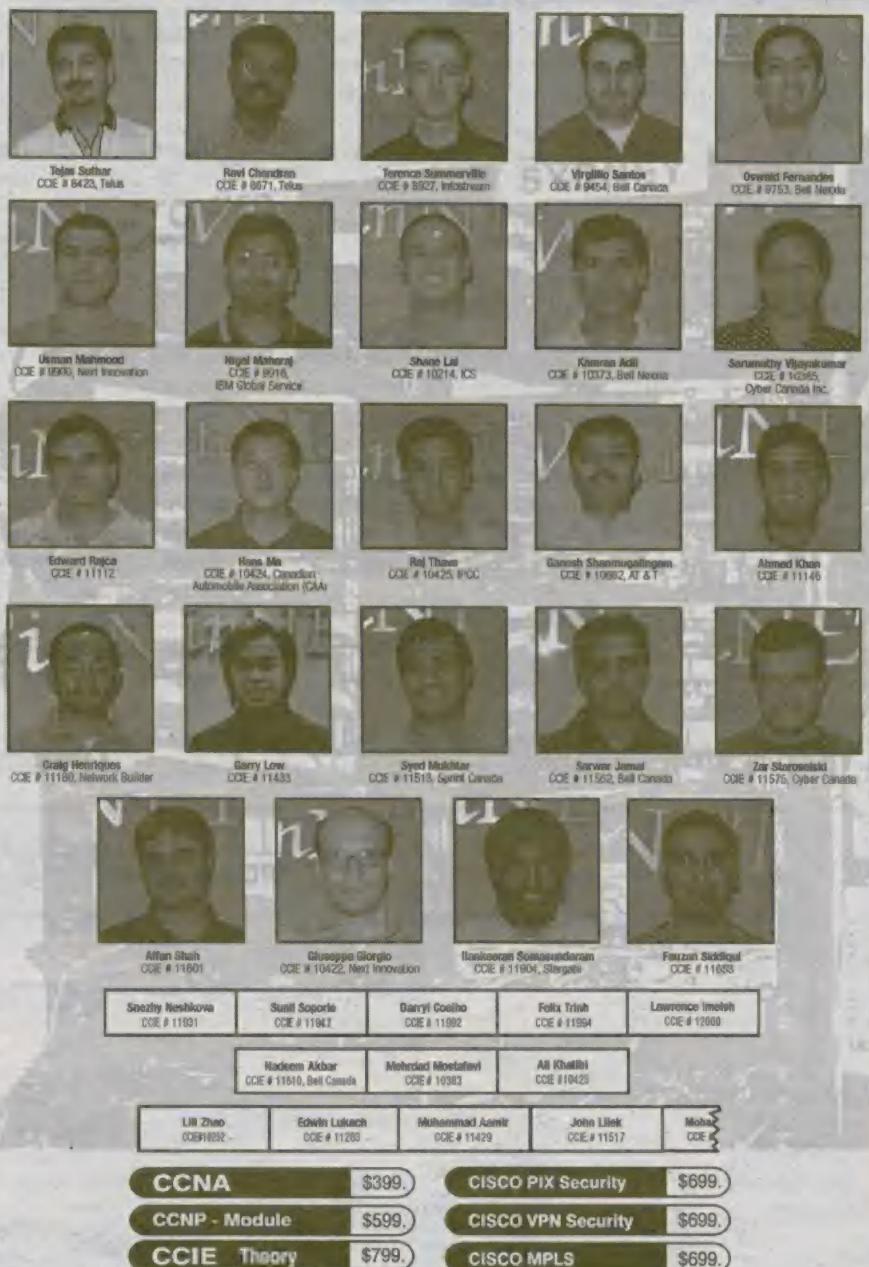
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Marc Saltzman

Game On!

The ol' deserted island question

We've all had this discussion at some point — you're sitting around with your friends at a pub, or perhaps on a long road trip,

and the conversation turns to music and how today's bands just don't hold a candle to the classic groups of the '70s. Gee, Justin Timberlake or Led Zeppelin? Hmm. Lemme think.

Then, someone pipes up and asks: "Hey, if you were stranded on a deserted island, what three albums would you bring?"

And so on and so forth.

But surely you'd rather bring a computer game or console game to a deserted island than any old music CD, right?

Well, we thought it would be interesting if we turned to a couple video game luminaries of our time to ask what three games they would bring to a deserted isle, and why.

First we turn to Nintendo's Shigeru Miyamoto, responsible for many of our most beloved electronic characters, such as Mario, Luigi, Donkey Kong, and Link from the Legend of Zelda series. His picks, and why, are as follows:

1. *Tetris* — "So that I could dally away my time..."
2. *SimCity* — "I would like to have a game with me where the main theme is for the game player to create something."
3. *Super Mario 64* — "So that I could immediately work

on the next product right after I was able to return home from the island!"

Next, we hear from Konami's *Metal Gear Solid* series creator, Hideo Kojima. His response is as follows:

1. *Super Mario Brothers* — "The greatest masterpiece by Mr. Shigeru Miyamoto! I am who I am today thanks to this game; it taught me how great, fun, and deep an action game can be."
2. *Portopia Murder Case* — "An adventure game classic. This game taught me of the potential of the game medium to deliver drama and messages."
3. *Boktai* — "This is a game I am developing now, which involves the use of the sun. It is most suitable for a deserted island as you get



to understand the climate and environment of a deserted island through its gameplay."

Lastly, Naughty Dog's Jason Rubin gave us his top three picks. The creator of the coveted *Crash Bandicoot* and *Jak & Daxter* series offers the following:

1. *Gran Turismo 3* — "I am a car guy, and I am assuming that I would not be stranded with cars, or any usable road, so this is my fix."

Also, time trial creates an endless challenge."

2. *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City* — "Yeah, yeah, I know, it is the hottest current game so you think that I am just being trendy. But I can defend this choice with one word: Replayability. This game has it in spades."

3. *Half-Life* — "The sand. The sun. The time. I haven't showered in three years. What's that itching? There would be some frustrations, to be sure. And nothing gets frustration out like shootin' stuff."

What are your top three favourite computer or console games of all time? Email your answer to editor@tcp.ca ♦

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The sticker on the box says that *IL2 Sturmovik: Forgotten Battles* (*IL2FB*) is a sequel to *IL2 Sturmovik* (*IL2*), but this is not really the case. *IL2FB* is basically a stand-alone expansion pack. It has everything that the original had, but more.

The graphics, which were the strength in the original are still great. Planes look very realistic and the weather effects are spectacular. The game still focuses on the air war on the Second World War's eastern front. Units in *IL2FB* come from not only Germany and the Soviet Union, but also from Hungary and Finland. This gives history and simulation buffs a whole host of aircraft to experience — ones that are rarely talked about, much less simulated. There are 30 new aircraft to fly, including some total rarities, like a Soviet jet aircraft and famous planes — the JU-87 Stuka dive-bombers — that were omitted in the original game. You also get to fly some American (P-39 Airacobras, P-47) and British (Hawker Hurricanes) aircraft that were either sold to the warring sides or supplied under the Lend Lease arrangements.

Flying these planes is a lot of fun. This is mainly because of the great graphics. If you have not experienced flying a simulation plane, *IL2FB* will be of little help. When you hit the Training menu

Air combat sequel remembers forgotten battles



button, you get a long list of training subjects for various planes. However, these are just little movies that explain how things are done. There is no real training — you do not get to fly the plane or interact in any way with the controls. To apply what you have seen, you have to go out and do a mission. I can see this being a bit baffling for someone new to flight simulators. I would like to see interactive lessons here — especially with such concepts as dive-bombing and aerial combat.

The Campaign system has been tweaked but is still cumbersome and tedious at times. My favourite method of

playing *IL2* and *IL2FB* is the Quick Mission builder. You get to quickly hop into one of many different planes, select the opponent and you're off. This function has unfortunately not been improved. Players are still limited to the same three maps they had in the original game — this is unfortunate but not a big detraction. There are more ground targets to hit and it is a great way to learn the airplanes and experiment with techniques that the training section should have taught you.

Engaging other aircraft is difficult in this game. One of the reasons for this is because the artificial intelligence (AI) of

the opposing side is so good. When they fire at you it is always straight and true and gets you pretty quickly. When I am firing back it is always shaky and with more hope than confidence. Turning down the opposing side's skill level to rookie helps a bit, but only for a minute or two. I solved this problem by making myself invincible, and giving myself unlimited ammunition and fuel. Now I'm the scourge of the skies.

Although not a significant improvement on the original, *IL2 Sturmovik: Forgotten Battles* is fun and looks great. However, unless you are a real fan of air simulations, or a history buff, this version offers nothing substantially new. If you are out looking for a challenging and realistic air combat simulation you will not go wrong with *IL2 Sturmovik: Forgotten Battles*. ♦

more info

IL2 Sturmovik: Forgotten Battles
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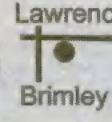
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Profile: Choclair

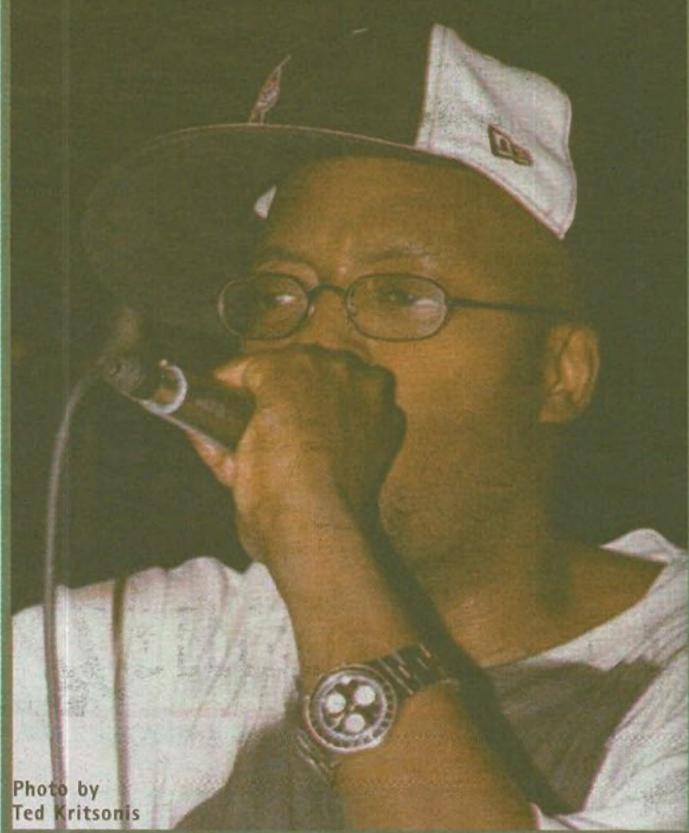


Photo by
Ted Kritsonis

The spotlight on stage is like a home away from home for Choclair, given that the Scarborough native has been a mainstay in Canada's burgeoning hip hop scene over the last several years.

Though it may be on the rise, Canadian hip hop has been a tough sell pretty much everywhere for quite some time. But a recent surge had a lot to do with Choclair's debut album, *Ice Cold*, doing so well domestically. Not every hip hop artist in Canada can lay claim to earning a living off their music, but Choclair — as humble as he is — does pretty well for himself.

After leaving the confines of a major label at Virgin Records, Choclair has found his way back to the grassroots by starting up his own independent label, Greenhouse Music. With his new album, *Flagrant*, released in June, Choclair is looking to shine in the spotlight once again.

Who: Choclair, hip hop artist and co-founder of Greenhouse Music.

Computer now used: I work on a Toshiba laptop.

Computer first used: It was a Gateway.

Favourite computer: Any half-decent laptop that can play *Sim City*.

Other technical gadgetry in use at this time: We use *Pro Tools* in the studio for recording, which I did my new album on. I also have a digital camera.

Do you use your computer for play?
Oh hell yeah.

Best thing about the technology you have: I play video games all the time. They really help me get through the day, especially when things are hectic.

Worst thing: When my game console doesn't work. That can really piss me off and ruin my whole day.

What can't you live without? As long as I have my video games and my radio, then I'm cool.

Is there anything you think you need? A private jet would be nice.

What frustrates you the most about technology? By the time you buy something, the manufacturer will come out with a better model of what you just got. It's like they're just stringing us along.

Personal take on issues dealing with technology: With all of the new tech stuff coming out, you have to watch your privacy. Whether it's the Internet, credit cards and microchips in your finger, it's like the mark of the beast on you. You've got to watch yourself, because someone is probably watching you. ♦

— Ted Kritsonis

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